Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MADRID 04385 101440Z

51
ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-14 ISO-00 SAM-01 AF-10 OMB-01 INRE-00

SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 EURE-00 PM-07 NSC-07 SS-20

H-03 DRC-01 /109 W
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O R 101150Z JUL 74
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9422
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY ROME
CINCUSAREUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 4385

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SP
SUBJ: HOSPITALIZATION OF FRANCO

REF: MADRID 4356

1. SPANISH MEDIA REPORT JULY 10 COMMENTARIES OF FRANCO'S DOCTOR, VICENTE GIL GARCIA, THAT GENERALISMO HAD MADE "MAGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT" SINCE BEING ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL PREVIOUS DAY (REFTEL). DOCTOR ALSO SAID IT WAS FIRST TIME THAT FRANCO HAD SUFFERED FROM PHLEBITIS AND THAT OPERATION WOULD NOT BE NECES-SARY. RUMORS PERSIST, HOWEVER, THAT FRANCO WILL UNDERGO OPERATION. SPANISH NEWS AGENCY ANNOUNCED AT 1000Z JULY 10 THAT THE MEDICAL TEAM HAD DETECTED SIGNS OF A FADING OF THE PHLEBITIS PROCESS IN THE LOWER RIGHT LEG AND THAT THERE WAS NO REPERCUSSION OF ANY KIND ON HIS GENERAL CONDITION.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 MADRID 04385 101440Z

2. FRANCO RECEIVED PRINCE JUAN CARLOS FOR OVER ONE HOUR

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

AFTER BEING ADMITTED. HE ALSO RECEIVED PRESIDENT ARIAS NAVARRO, CORTES PRESIDENT VALCARCEL, FOREIGN MINISTER CORTINA, AND OTHER OFFICIALS BESIDES MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY. MEDIA, WHICH REPORTED FRANCO'S HOSPITALIZATION WITHIN MINUTES, HAVE GIVEN EXTENSIVE COVERAGE TO NUMBERS OF VISITORS.

3. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, THIS IS FIRST FRANCO ILLNESS SINCE FLU WHICH HE SUFFERED AT TIME OF CARRERO BLANCO'S ASSASSINATION, DECEMBER 20, 1973. BESIDES HAVING RECOVERED FROM THREE WOUNDS IN HIS EARLY MILITARY CAREER, FRANCO RECEIVED A WOUND IN A HUNTING ACCIDENT IN 1961. HE IS ACCUSTOMED TO WEARING DARK GLASSES DUE TO A SENSITIVITY TO EXCESSIVE LIGHT, AND VISITORS REPORT THAT HE IS VERY HARD OF HEARING.

4. ACCORDING TO MILITARY SOURCES, THE VARIOUS SERVICES HAVE BEEN REVIEWING THEIR EMEMGENCY PROCE-DURES SINCE YESTERDAY, BUT NO MILITARY ALERT HAS BEEN DECIDED NOR ANY PRE-ALERT PREPARATIONS. SOME MILITARY

OFFICERS HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT TIMING OF FRANCO'S ILLNESS BECAUSE OF CONTINUING REVERBERATIONS OF UNSETTLED PORTUGUESE SITUATION IN SPAIN.

5. COMMENT: MEDIA TREATMENT OF FRANCO'S ILLNESS AND IMPRESSION OF CALMNESS AND CONFIDENCE DISPLAYED BY HIS MANY VISITORS SUGGGEST THAT HOSPITALIZATION CAREFULLY PLANNED. DATE OF HOSPITALIZATION COINCIDES WITH START OF VACATION SEASON IN SPAIN AND DOWNTURN IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY. FRANCO'S ABSENCE FROM ACTIVE AFFAIRS OF STATE WOULD NOT HAVE REPERCUSSIONS NOW WHICH THEY MIGHT HAVE DURING OTHER TIME OF YEAR. INDEED, HE WOULD NORMALLY START HIS OWN VACATION SOON.

6. THE GOS HAS ALREADY ANNOUNCED THAT SEVERAL CABINET MEETINGS WILL BE HELD IN MADRID, ONE IN SAN SEBASTIAN, AND ANOTHERIN LA CORUNA THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER. IF FRANCO IS UNABLE TO PRESIDE AT THESE MEETINGS, HE MIGHT AGREE TO HAVING THE PRINCE SIT IN FORHIM. THIS CONFIDENTIAL

WOULD ALLOW THE PRINCE TO ACQUIRE SOME MORE PRESTIGE WITHOUT REQUIRING ANY CHANGE IN LAW. IN RECENT YEARS THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS EVERY JULY, THE ANNIVERSARY MONTH OF FRANCO'S UPRISING IN 1936, THAT HE WOULD DO SOMETHING TO STRENGTHEN THE PRINCE'S ROLE, E.G., MORE PROTOCOL DUTIES ACTING AS HEAD OF STATE. FRANCO DIVESTED HIMSELF ALREADY OF HIS ROLE AS PRESIDENT IN JULY 1973 AND COULD DO SOMETHING THIS YEAR TO DEPERSONALIZE

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

FURTHER HIS ROLE, ESPECIALLY IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.
JUAN CARLOS AND HIS FATHER, THE COUNT OF BARCELONA, HAVE
RECENTLY ACTED IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH THE REGIME'S
PLANS FOR SUCCESSION AND FRANCO HAS UNDOUBTEDLY TAKEN THIS
FACT INTO ACCOUNT IN PLANNING ANY POSSIBLE ANNIVERSARY
GESTURE THIS YEAR.
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EO Systematic Review
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